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NATIONAL FORESTS AS RECREATION GROUNDS

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In extent, in variety of attractions, and in availability to the people of the country, the national forests form as a whole by far the greatest national recreation grounds in the world. Some of them, especially those near large centers of population, draw tens of thousands every season. Altogether, some 400,000 persons visit the forests annually for recreation. Most of these come from nearby cities and towns, but many come from other states and even from other countries. Moreover, the use of the forests for recreation has only fairly begun. It is increasing very rapidly—at least ten per cent a year on the average, and in some cases one hundred per cent a year.

The national forests are maintained to conserve the vast natural resources of wood and water. These resources are located on the slopes, crests, and peaks of the Rockies and the Coast Ranges, which are the most picturesque and healthful regions in the United States. Thus, by geographic necessity, they include the highest peaks, the finest glaciers, the most interesting geological formations, and much of the best virgin forests in the United States. They are, as a rule, supplied with pure water in great abundance. They contain much of the best hunting and fishing country. Within them are many of the most striking and important historic and prehistoric landmarks, as well as natural wonders which do not suffer by comparison with those of the national parks. An endless variety of landscape and every natural charm are included in their boundaries.

Recreation in the national forests usually takes the form of summer outings devoted simply to camping out. Individuals and small parties, or clubs, come in by stage or wagon—in some cases, by automobile—bringing with them provisions for a longer or a shorter visit, make camp, and shift for themselves with true western independence and skill. Doing without many conveniences is not regarded as privation. In comparison with this western way of enjoying nature, the usual eastern summer vacations spent at boarding

houses and hotels, or in camps which are camps in little more than name, appear highly artificial. In the national forests enjoyment of recreation is largely based on the absence of conditions which less sincere and capable lovers of outdoor life find quite as indispensable in the woods as in the towns. This fact explains much of the very wide use of national forests for recreation, in regions which are largely pure wilderness.

Summer cottages and hotels within the forests accommodate a large number of seekers after recreation. Many of the cottages are owned by city people who spend the summers in them. Others are rented. Railways which are interested in developing their summer business are doing much to attract visitors by providing and encouraging hotels and cottages in the forests. To mention but a single case in point, the Great Northern Railroad is developing the attractions of the Lake McDonald region, in the Blackfoot Forest. It has established a hotel on the Flathead River as headquarters for visitors, and has begun the erection of a series of Swiss chalets and cabins from point to point.

Besides just "camping out," the visitors do a great deal of fishing in a very energetic sort of way. In some forests they spend most of the season in fishing on almost a professional scale. Mountain climbing, boating, and riding are favorite pursuits. In the autumn, in the forests where game is plentiful, hunting is the chief sport. A detailed account of the attractions for recreation in the national forests is, of course, out of the question in this paper. Some slight idea of their variety may, however, be indicated briefly.

Scenery.—Almost every type of landscape may be found in the forests. For ruggedness and grandeur the forests of Washington and Oregon are probably unsurpassed. From the top of Goat Mountain in the Rainier National Forest, nothing can be seen but snow-capped peaks and crests in all directions; the landscape is Alpine in character. The view from Cone Peak in the Oregon National Forest, though somewhat softened by stretches of forest and by lakes, is of the same sort. The Olympic Forest lies in a region which has been called the "Alps of the United States." Chelan Forest includes three-quarters of the famous Lake Chelan, which is said to rival in impressiveness any lake in the Old World. These northwestern forests, besides the high peaks and crests, include some of the most notable glaciers in the country.

Those who know assert that the Rockies have no finer scenery to offer than is to be found in the region of the Blackfeet Forest in Montana, in the so-called Lake McDonald country. This region is visited by thousands of persons from all parts of the United States and foreign countries. The principal attractions of this forest are the Blackfoot, Kintla, Sperry, and other glaciers, which number about sixty in all, the superb mountains, and Lake McDonald. It is proposed to establish the Glacier National Park here. No scenery in the United States is at once more magnificent and more charming.

Yellowstone National Park is surrounded by national forests, one of which is the Shoshone Forest, through which runs the so-called East Road to the Yellowstone. At least 3,000 persons visit the Shoshone Forest every summer for recreation. Other forests much visited in this region are the Absaroka, Bonneville (Fremont Peak, over 14,000 feet), Targhee, and Teton. The two forests last named are adjacent to the Jackson Hole country, the most famous big game region in the United States, while the Teton Range has a skyline which is said to be unrivaled anywhere.

The mountain scenery of Colorado is too familiar to require extended notice. Pike's Peak is in the Pike Forest, and since the peak has been made accessible by several railways this forest has become more visited than any other. It is estimated that 100,000 persons seek recreation in the Pike Forest every year.

Among the Utah forests should be mentioned especially the Wasatch, the Uinta, and the Fishlake, which furnish fine examples of Rocky Mountain scenery.

Idaho offers in the Sawtooth, the Boise, the Pend Oreille, the Kaniksu, the Cœur d'Alene, and other forests some of the most attractive and the most popular recreation grounds in the whole number.

Toward the south, the configuration of the country is markedly different. What geologists call "erratic erosion" has resulted in the odd butte formations which are so characteristic of the landscape in the forests in Arizona and New Mexico. The Kaibab and Cocconino forests in Arizona include the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, which is superior to anything of the kind elsewhere. The Sitgreaves and Apache forests, also in Arizona, cover the rise of the plateau which ends on the south in the so-called Mogollon Rim, where the land drops suddenly. From this rim the outlook over

southern Arizona is exceedingly wide. These forests, which are already much visited, appear destined to become one of the chief recreation grounds for people of the Southwest.

Especially popular recreation grounds are the California forests. In the main, these are accessible, while their delightful climate during a great part of the year gives them a special advantage. Some of the most notable scenery found in any of the forests is in this state. From the summit of San Jacinto Mountain, in the Cleveland Forest, may be had one of the most varied views imaginable. On the north is an unobstructed view across mountain and desert into Nevada; eastward, there is a clear sweep over the Salton Sea into Arizona; to the south, beyond a succession of lesser peaks, ridges, and valleys, Mexico may be seen; and to the west are intensively cultivated groves of fruit and fields of grain, and then the ocean, with the islands of Clemente, Catalina, and Coronado from eighty to one hundred miles distant on the horizon. Notable peaks in California forests are Mt. Whitney, in the Sequoia Forest, and Shasta and Lassen peaks in forests of the same names. Of all the volcanic mountains in the United States, Lassen Peak has been active most recently. Tahoe Forest, which draws some twenty thousand persons every year, includes Lake Tahoe, famous among the most picturesque lakes in the world. The bigtrees of the Stanislaus and Sequoia forests are of never-ending interest, while the Inyo Forest, with its beautiful lakes and meadows occurring at elevations of from eight to ten thousand feet, is typical of the High Sierra landscape. The Sequoia Forest includes the famous King's River Canyon, superior to that in the Yosemite National Park. Angeles Forest is visited by thousands.

The Superior Forest, in Minnesota, is in a class by itself. The whole region in which it lies has been made a state game preserve. It is a hilly region, strewn with countless lakes which are connected in long chains. Canoes may cruise these waters for as much as forty miles without a single carry. One is distinctly reminded of the Adirondacks, of New York, with which the Superior Forest region compares very favorably. The opportunity offered in this forest for the study of wild life, in which the country abounds, is rivaled only by the Sawtooth Forest, in Idaho, the Jackson Hole region, and the Minnesota Forest, in all of which game is preserved by the state.

National Monuments and Parks.—Natural wonders and landmarks of historic and prehistoric interest are numerous in the national forests. A number of these have been set apart as national monuments. Altogether, there are seven national monuments within the forests: The Cinder Cone, in the Lassen Forest, California; the Gila Cliff Dwellings, in the Gila Forest, New Mexico; the Grand Canyon, in the Kaibab and Coconino forests, Arizona; the Jewel Cave, in the Black Hills Forest, South Dakota; the Lassen Peak, in the Lassen Forest, California; the Pinnacles, in the Monterey Forest, California; and the Tonto, in the Tonto Forest, Arizona. These comprise a total area of 816,960 acres.

Of the national parks, the Yellowstone, the Sequoia, the Rainier, the Crater Lake, and the Yosemite lie within national forests, which frequently rival them closely, or even excel them, in scenic interest.

Medicinal Springs.—Medicinal and hot springs abound in many of the forests. They are still largely undeveloped, but already are widely used.

Encouragement of Recreation.—The use of the forests for recreation is indirectly encouraged by furthering their economic use. Permanent improvements, which are made as fast as the available funds will permit, are opening up the forests to every sort of legitimate use, and these improvements greatly add to the value of the forests for recreation. Roads, trails, and bridges, built for protection and the transaction of forest business, give visitors to the forest more ready access to all their parts. But a good deal is done by the Forest Service to encourage recreation directly, and this side of the subject must be briefly touched upon.

In general, forest officers spare no pains to serve visitors in the forests. They direct them to the best camping sites and to points of interest, do what they can to make them comfortable, and explain to them the forest regulations. More specifically, where occasion warrants, care is taken to prevent unfair use of camp and summer cottage sites. Thus, in the Minnesota Forest, for example, the shores of Cass Lake have been surveyed in blocks of camp sites, between which general access is had to the water. These sites are allotted to those who desire to establish camps, while the unallotted parts of the shore are used by those visiting the lake temporarily. By this arrangement, a desirable camp site may be secured from year to year for the nominal charge made for the permit, while monopoly

of the shore is prevented. The same general scheme is followed in many other forests.

To prevent the fouling of camp sites, grazing animals are kept at a proper distance. In this way campers who have horses are secured pasturage for them, since horses will not graze after sheep unless accustomed to run with them.

In some cases trails are made and bridges constructed expressly to open up places in the forests which are particularly well adapted for camps.

Assistance of this sort is keenly appreciated, and tends greatly to foster good feeling between the Service and the public.

Object Lessons in Forestry.—Visitors to the forests display keen interest in the objects and methods of forest administration. They have an opportunity to see the problems which have to be solved and the means employed for their solution. In this way the value of the work is brought home to them; they get an insight into it which only observation under skilled guidance can give. As a result, the general attitude of visitors is one of interested approval. The forest nurseries, in which seedlings are raised for reforestation, attract many, and where logging operations are in progress these are inspected and discussed. So marked is the interest shown in the practice of forestry that means will be taken, as far as practicable, to handle certain small areas in such a way as to furnish object lessons for purely educational purposes—what the forester would call demonstration plots. On Star Island, in Cass Lake, Minn., for instance, it is planned to handle the forest so as to show various kinds of silvicultural practice, such as nursery work, planting, and thinning. On the whole, the educational impression made upon those who take recreation in the forests must be regarded as considerable and important.

Future Use of the Forests for Recreation.—The use of national forests for recreation is certain to increase very greatly in the future. As the country becomes more crowded, and the wilderness retreats before the frontier of settlement, the national forests will tend to become almost the only available recreation grounds on a scale commensurate with the needs of the people. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to consider the future of the forests.

Fortunately, the objects for which the national forests were created and are maintained, will guarantee the permanence of their

resources and will bring about their fullest development for every use. The national forests safeguard the integrity of the resources and place their use on a permanent basis. For this reason the recreation value of the national forests can never be destroyed. On the contrary, it must increase. The development of the various resources requires the extension and maintenance of permanent improvements in the form of roads, trails, bridges, and telephone lines, for the better protection of the forests and for the readier transaction of forest business. These improvements, in turn, benefit all users of the forests, including those who visit them for recreation. As the forests are opened up progressively by more intensive economic use, they will become more attractive, more convenient, and more accessible.

So great is the value of national forest area for recreation, and so certain is this value to increase with the growth of the country and the shrinkage of the wilderness, that even if the forest resources of wood and water were not to be required by the civilization of the future, many of the forests ought certainly to be preserved, in the interest of national health and well-being, for recreation use alone.